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THE ATTEMPT TO REFORM THE CHURCH OF COLONIAL VIRGINIA

The branch of the Anglican Church which was established in the colony of Virginia differed in many important respects from the original body. The basic doctrines were, of course, the same, but there was wide divergence in organization, in government, even in the form of worship. This was the result of unique economic, political, and social conditions which the Church encountered in Virginia. The ecclesiastical establishment began, from the very hour of its foundation, a separate and peculiar development. It became, inevitably had to become, the child of Virginia. It had to shape and mould itself, so far as possible, into something suited to the requirements and life of the colony.

Unfortunately this development was by no means wholesome. The Anglican Church did not, like the English representative institutions, flourish on the soil of Virginia. The plantation life of the colonists and their democratic tendencies caused its growth to be halting and unhealthful. By the end of the seventeenth century it was apparent to all that its condition was such that unless vigorous efforts were made to effect a thorough reform, decay and ruin were inevitable. Its government was divided and weak, the character of its clergy was poor, many parishes were vacant, the liturgy was neglected, the religious wants of the people were imperfectly met.

The Church in Virginia was unfavorably affected by the sparseness of the population. It made necessary the establishing of parishes of very great size, so great, in fact, that no one man could minister to them properly. The evil was most pronounced

during the seventeenth century, when the country was not fully settled. The plantations followed the banks of the great rivers and did not extend for more than a mile or two into the back country. This made it necessary for the parishes to be very narrow and of extreme length. As time passed and the population increased, the parishes were altered in size and in shape, but they remained always of great extent. In 1724, St. Paul's parish, in Hanover County, was no less than sixty miles long. Bristol and Hungers covered each forty miles, Westminster and Westover thirty. Where the parishes were smaller the difficulty of providing a support for able pastors often made it necessary to place two or more cures under the care of one clergyman.

This state of affairs led, as a matter of course, to serious neglect of religion. Regular attendance at worship was impossible. It required deep devotion and constancy of purpose for people to make their way ten or fifteen miles to church through the forests of Virginia. The evil was mitigated to some extent by the establishment in remote districts of chapels of ease. These, however, were very poorly served. Usually worship was conducted only by lay readers, for the pastor could seldom visit them more than one Sunday in the month. Often even chapels were lacking, and the clergymen found it necessary to ride out to their scattered flocks to preach in private houses. The great distance made it very difficult for the ministers to win and retain the friendship and love of their flocks, for they could not be frequent visitors at homes that were perhaps ten or fifteen miles from the parsonage. They could not even attend their sick. Some of the Virginia parsons struggled manfully against the weight of unfortunate conditions. It must have been a familiar sight to see them upon their mud-splashed horses, making their way along the narrow paths of the forests to bring the Gospel to the homes of their scattered parishioners. But the fight was a hard one, and many of the clergy were neither earnest enough nor brave enough to make it.

Thoughtful men were early keenly aware of the danger which threatened the Church from this source. In letters and pamphlets the opinion was frequently expressed that religion could never flourish so long as the colonists retained their system of

isolated plantations. "In remote and scattered settlements," wrote a certain Francis Makenzie, "we can never enjoy . . . Privileges and Opportunities [of religious worship], for by reason of bad weather, or other accidents Ministers are prevented, and people are hindered to attend. . . . It is a melancholy Consideration how many . . . continue grossly ignorant of many necessary facts of the Christian Religion." "Their seating themselves in that Wilderness," declared another writer, "hath caused them hitherto to rob God in a great measure of that publick Worship and Service which . . . he requires to be constantly paid to him. . . . This Sacriledge I judge to be the prime Cause of their long languishing, improsperous condition, for it puts them under the Curse of God."

The sparseness of the population injured the clergyman in still another way: it made it very difficult for the people to provide him with an adequate salary. No matter how large his parish, it usually embraced but a small congregation. In Virginia there was nothing comparable to the great endowments which had existed for centuries in England, and which had done so much to make the Church independent and powerful. The colonial clergy were paid almost entirely from funds raised by taxation. In the first half of the seventeenth century the salaries of the ministers varied greatly. It was the practice to assess each titheable* in the colony for church dues, but the money thus raised was not distributed equally. Each clergyman received all the funds raised in his parish and no more. His annual stipend might be £80, it might be less than £30. For some years the tax was placed at ten pounds of tobacco and a bushel of corn for each titheable.

This system worked great hardships upon the clergy in the less populous counties, and in 1662 the practice of the colony was changed. An act was passed attempting to make all the salaries uniform. It mattered not whether a minister served a large parish or a small one, he was to receive a stated salary, fixed by the Assembly. Unfortunately this brought about great inequality in the distribution of church dues. In the thinly set-

*The titheable were all persons subject to the head, or poll, tax.

tled parishes the burden upon each titheable became very heavy. The law required that each minister should receive "in the valuable and current commodityes of the countrey" at least £80, "besides the perquisites and glebe." If the payment were made in tobacco, the valuation was to be at the rate of twelve shillings a hundred pounds.

The law, when it was first passed, must have provided the clergy with a maintenance suited to their calling and their requirements. Unfortunately the Navigation Acts brought about, during the Restoration Period, a sharp decline in the price of tobacco and diminished the value of the ministers' salaries. The 13,333 pounds of leaf which the law allotted them had brought in the market not far from the £80 at which the act had set it, but thirty years later it was worth only half that sum. The clergy complained bitterly of this unfortunate development, and appealed to the Assembly to change the valuation of their tobacco so that it would approximate the true market price. In this they were unsuccessful. In 1696 the Assembly, under pressure from England, increased to 16,000 pounds the amount of tobacco paid each minister, but this by no means restored the income to its former value. In addition to his regular salary each clergyman was entitled to a parsonage and glebe, but the law in this respect was often evaded by the parishes. Some of the clergy received no glebes at all, and those given to others were of little value. It was asserted that "one with another" the glebes were "not worth above forty or fifty shillings per annum."

All in all, the livings furnished the Virginia clergy were most inadequate. Frequently they could not attend properly to their duties because they were harassed by poverty. They could not supply themselves with books. Many of them were compelled to remain single, for women of culture and refinement hesitated to mate with them. In 1692 James Blair represented to William III, probably with some exaggeration, that their condition was miserable in the extreme. "The Ministers' Salaries," he said, "are fallen above one half, and there is no more hope that they can live comfortably upon them, so that many of the better sort who can pay their passage, begin to desert the country."

The plantation system made it impossible for the clergy to conform fully to the liturgy. This was a matter of deep concern to many of the pastors who came to the colony, but they were powerless to remedy the evil. They discovered that rules and ordinances which were well suited to the Church in the mother country could not be enforced in the "wilderness of America." As we have seen, one of the most common breaches of the liturgy was the extensive use of lay readers in both churches and chapels. But the practice was unavoidable. The number of ordained priests was insufficient for the needs of the people, and laymen of "sober life and conversation" had to be employed frequently, or many allowed to go for weeks at a time without public worship. The colonists also violated the liturgy by burying their dead in private cemeteries. The clergy frowned upon the custom, but they found that it was made necessary by the isolation of the plantations. "It is a common thing all over the country," wrote James Blair, "(what thro' want of ministers, what by great distance . . .) both to bury at other places than Church yards, & to employ Laicks to read the funeral Service; till our circumstances and Laws are altered, we know not how to redress." More serious still was the necessity of administering the sacraments without the prescribed vestments and without "proper Ornaments and Vessels." In fact, both clergy and laity became lax in observing many things considered of importance by the Anglican Church. None of the Holy Days were observed except Christmas and Good Friday, the Lord's Supper was often administered to unconfirmed persons, marriages were solemnized in private residences.

The government of the Virginia Church was essentially different from that of the body from which it sprang. In the early years of the colony, when the inhabitants were but a few hundred in number, the king had commissioned his governor to take control of ecclesiastical matters. This he felt was all that was necessary, for the appointing of a bishop or the establishment of a hierarchy was not to be thought of for an infant colony. But the governor proved ill-suited to be the head of the Church. His other duties required his full attention, while his political interests at times conflicted with those of the clergy. Moreover,

as a layman he could never become in a real sense the Bishop of Virginia. During most of the seventeenth century the governors seem to have neglected their clerical duties, and left the Church to develop as time and local conditions should determine. This made possible that strange anomaly,—a democratic branch of the Anglican Church.

In Virginia the churches were built almost invariably by the people, and not, as was often the case in England, by wealthy patrons. Moreover, the clergy were paid, as we have seen, by the people by means of local taxation. The people, therefore, through their vestries, claimed a major part in the control of the Church. They were, they argued, the true patrons of the parishes, and as such had the right to select their own ministers. This pretense they made good. Throughout the entire colonial period most of the clergy officiated only as the salaried employees of the vestries. In a few cases, where the ministers showed themselves men of ability and true piety, the vestries presented them to the governors for induction. When this was done they held their places for life. But it is probable that not more than one-tenth of the clergy were thus honored by their parishes.

In the meanwhile circumstances had been making the Bishop of London the diocesan of all the colonial Church. At first his duties in his new office seem to have been confined to sending ministers to the plantations. Before the end of the seventeenth century, however, he assumed a more direct control and appointed in several colonies commissaries to represent him and uphold his authority. In Virginia this officer never exercised great power, and by no means superseded the governor as the head of the local Church. He was empowered to hold conventions, make visitations, and supervise the conduct of the clergy. The governor claimed by his commission the power of giving licenses for marriages, probates of wills, and inductions of ministers. As this division of authority resulted in frequent clashes between the governor and the commissary, it brought discredit upon the Church, and was a source of great weakness in its government.

The insufficient salaries and the insecurity of tenure conspired to bring upon the Church another evil. It became a

matter of the greatest difficulty to secure able and pious ministers. It is always with reluctance that men leave their homes to migrate to a distant and strange land, and great advantages must be shown them before they will make the venture. These advantages the Virginia Church could not offer. As a result, it was forced, only too frequently, to be content with men of inferior ability and character. There were, of course, many good and earnest ministers in Virginia. Scores of instances could be cited of men who accepted without complaint the arduous task of upholding religion in the colony, and won the love and respect of their parishioners. But there can be little doubt that the Virginia parson was only too often ill-suited to his holy calling. Of ministers, as of "all other commodities," wrote Sir William Berkeley, with some bitterness, "the worst are sent us." Governor Nicholson declared "that the Clergy were all a Pack of Scandalous fellows." In 1704 the vestry of Varina parish complained that often the Virginia ministers were weak men or worse, "being given to many vices not agreeable to their Coates." Their own commissary testified that there were "enormities among them." In 1697, a certain Nicholas Moreau wrote that the clergy were "of a very ill example." Some of them had been so scandalous in their conduct that they had created a strong prejudice among the people against the clergy as a whole. Matters became so bad that in 1718 the Bishop of London felt it necessary to warn them that "the faults & miscarriages in the life and conversation of some" of them, must be corrected. This admonition accomplished little, and six years later it was declared necessary to take severe action against such vices on the part of the clergy as "cursing, swearing, Drunkenness, or fighting." It was seriously proposed to establish a test to determine how far a minister might proceed in his cups before passing the limits of sobriety. "First, let the signs of Drunkenness be proved, such as sitting an hour or longer in the Company when they were a drinking strong drink and in the meantime drinking of healths or otherwise taking his cups as they came round . . . ; striking, challenging, threatening to fight, or laying aside any of his Garments for that purpose; staggering, reeling, vomiting, incoherent, impertinent, obscene or rude talking."

At first sight it seems strange that the people of Virginia should have submitted to conditions such as these ; but they were forced to accept ministers of poor character or have none at all. The vestry of Christ Church parish, Lancaster County, declared that it was so hard for them to secure pastors that they were glad to accept any that offered, "let their lives be never so licentious or their qualifications so unfit."

Some parishes were forced for years to remain vacant. And throughout the entire colonial period there never was a time when the supply of ministers was equal to the demand for them. As early as 1611 we find the colonists begging for "godly and earnest" men to fill their pulpits. In 1620 there were only five ministers in the colony. Nine years later Governor Harvey, in a letter addressed to the Privy Council, tried to impress upon the English government the crying need for "able and grave" pastors to attend the spiritual needs of the people. "Do they not either wilfully hide their talents," complained another writer, "or keep themselves at home, for fear of losing a few pleasures? Be not there any among them of Moses and his mind, and of the Apostles, who forsook all to follow Christ?" During the Commonwealth period this want was still so severely felt that especial inducements were offered to ministers by the Assembly to migrate to the colony. In 1661 the king was implored to ask Oxford and Cambridge universities to furnish the Virginia Church with the ministers they so greatly needed. When Lord Culpeper became governor, thirty-four clergymen were ministering to forty-eight parishes, and seventeen years later there were fifty parishes, while the number of pastors was but twenty-two. A letter from the vestry of Lawn's Creek parish to Governor Francis Nicholson, written in 1704, throws much light upon the troubles of the people in this matter. "Our condition here in Virginia is very different from that of England," they said, "for there are always enough in orders there to supply vacancies. Here there has never yet been ministers enough to supply us, neither are there now incumbents in above half our parishes and none unbeneficed to be presented by those that are vacant. Neither can we get them, tho we have earnestly tried to procure them from England."

Such was the condition of the Virginia Church as the seventeenth century drew to a close. To thoughtful and pious men it seemed that things could not be worse. With the clergy poorly paid, insufficient in numbers and of inferior ability and character, with the liturgy disregarded in many important respects, with the parishes too large to be properly ministered to, with the church government disorganized and weak, unless radical reforms were instituted immediately, decay and utter ruin were inevitable.

The great Churchmen of England were not ignorant of the danger which threatened. In pamphlets and reports and letters the clergy, not only of Virginia, but of several other colonies, made frequent complaints of their troubles. Yet nothing was done to effect reform until the accession to the See of London, in 1675, of Henry Compton. This man took very seriously his duties as diocesan of the Colonial Church, and devoted his best talents to them.

He seems to have made at once a careful investigation of conditions in various colonies, and, July 17, 1677, he laid before the Board of Trade a report of the abuses he had found in ecclesiastical matters. He complained of the laxness of the governors in upholding the king's right of patronage, the seizure by the people of the profits of vacant parishes, of the hiring of the ministers by the vestries, of the payment of their salaries in cheap tobacco. He deprecated the continuance of the "profane custom of burying in their gardens, orchards, and other places," and the use of laymen to perform the marriage ceremony.

The Board's action upon this memorial shows that they failed completely to realize how deeply the trouble was rooted in the whole economic and social life of the colonies. They themselves had no remedy to suggest, they simply directed the governors to put an end to each abuse, as though these officers were omnipotent, or could, with a wave of the hand, revolutionize the Colonial Church. They directed them to see to it that adequate salaries be given the clergy, that burying in private cemeteries be prohibited, that the tenure of the clergy be made secure, that the income from vacant parishes be utilized for providing transportation for ministers. Having thus disposed of the whole

matter, the Board forgot the Church for a while, and turned its attention to the regular routine of economic and political affairs.

In 1681, and again in 1683, they received reports from Governor Culpeper, of Virginia, which must have opened their eyes. This nobleman made, during his short visits to the colony, an investigation into ecclesiastical matters, and gained some conception of the nature of the task the government had set him. He explained to the Board that to put things in "a good method" would be very "tedious and the labor of years." The root of the trouble lay in the insufficiency of the salaries, he thought. In most parts of the colony the 13,333 pounds of tobacco granted the clergy was not worth more than half "what was at first designed," and in only four parishes was the value equal to £80 a year. "Which way to begin," he added, "I know not. Good ministers would in time certainly get a better Interest in the People, but, without encouragement few will goe so far, and the people are not only poor in general, but several parts, either from barrenness, unhealthfulness or lying too remote are almost totally deserted. . . . A universal poverty is unanswerable." Culpeper made it clear to the Board that the power of the vestries over the ministers was founded upon their control of all church funds. The governor might appoint whom he chose, but unless the vestry approved of the selection the minister would receive not a penny of his salary. This was entirely wrong, he thought, but any attempt to effect a change would have to be managed with the utmost caution.

The interest of the Bishop of London in the Colonial Church increased, and his determination to effect a reformation became more fixed, as the difficulties of the undertaking bore in upon him. He early sought a clear definition of his powers in the plantations, and prevailed upon the king to grant him all ecclesiastical jurisdiction except what concerned marriages, induction of ministers, and probate of wills. He secured a bounty of £20 for each clergyman taking passage to the colony, and caused instructions to be given the governors to permit no man to enter the ministry without license from him or his successors. He sent to Virginia supplies of books—Bibles, homilies, canons, the book of common prayer, the thirty-nine articles, tables of mar-

riages. He induced able clergymen to take cures in the plantations by promising them preferment upon their return to England. In the Board of Trade he took care that nothing should pass which could in any way interfere with the welfare of religion.

Perhaps Compton's greatest service was his institution of the office of commissary. As the governor was in each colony the king's representative and substitute, so was the commissary the deputy of the Bishop of London. It was his duty to supervise the clergy, to uphold the authority of the bishop and to keep him advised as to the course of events. The first regular commission for this office was granted in 1689 to James Blair. Compton could not have made a better selection. Dr. Blair is one of the strongest, one of the most interesting, characters in the history of the British American colonies. One cannot make even a cursory study of Virginia during the years from 1680 to 1725 without encountering at every turn evidences of the influence of this sturdy clergyman. While employed in England as Master of the Rolls, he had known Compton, and it was he who had persuaded him to come to the colony. Blair was assigned to Varina parish upon his arrival in 1685, and served there until forced to resign many years later in order to take up his duties as President of William and Mary College. His ministry here gave him an opportunity of observing for himself the conditions which were undermining the Church: the large parishes, insufficient salaries, insecure tenure, the neglect of the liturgy, the need of able and pious ministers. Why was it, he asked himself, that religion in Virginia was permitted to decay? Could not something be done to better conditions and make the Colonial Church more like the great establishment in England from which it sprang? With the receipt of his commission he entered actively upon the work of reform.

In the task which he set himself, Dr. Blair found an enthusiastic supporter in the new lieutenant-governor, Francis Nicholson. This strange man, despite his profanity, his violence, his immoral life, was always an ardent friend of the Church. The clergy regarded him as their champion and benefactor. One grateful minister spoke of him as "the Right hand of God, the father of the Church, and more, the father of the poor." So

great, he thought, was his influence for good, that were he aided by an American bishop, he would settle the Church in those parts, and "make Hell tremble."

So now this ill-assorted trio—Blair, Nicholson, and Compton—went to work to set things right with the Virginia Church. It was the commissary who took the active lead. With the lieutenant-governor's approval and aid he drew up a scheme of reform which later was laid before the Bishop of London and other great British prelates. This programme was of far-reaching and vital import to the colony. Had it been successful in all its parts it would have altered the religious, moral, and political life of the people.

The reformers were especially intent upon bettering the character of the clergy. Little good, they thought, could be accomplished until Virginia had secured a body of pious and able ministers, capable of commanding the love and respect of the people. With this in view they sought to increase the salaries, to get a more secure tenure, to establish ecclesiastical discipline, and to erect a college in the colony for the training of young men for divine orders.

In securing greater salaries for the clergy Blair feared strong opposition in the Assembly. Many counties would be certain to object to any increase in their parish levies, and would instruct their burgesses to vote against it. But Nicholson might force the measure through by using the influence which belonged to his office. He could make it a party measure, and insist that all who wished to retain his favor must vote for it. If this should prove not enough, the commissary was to enlist the influence of the English bishops to obtain a command from the king and queen that the clergy must be better provided for.

Blair laid stress upon the proposed college. He regarded it as a great evil that the Church in Virginia should be entirely dependent upon England for its supply of ministers. How much better it would be, could some of the promising young men of Virginia be induced to turn from the all-absorbing culture of tobacco to take up the ministry! As there was in the colony no means of preparing them for this vocation, the commissary now planned to remove the difficulty by erecting a local college.

Pressure was to be brought to bear upon the parishes to make them present their ministers so that the Lieutenant-Governor could induct them. They must no longer be allowed to treat the clergy, as Blair expressed it, as "hired servants." If the vestries proved obstinate it was thought they might be brought to terms with the threat to induct *jure devoluto*, or even to take from them entirely the right of patronage.

Ecclesiastical discipline was to be made a reality. The clergyman who was lax in his duties, who lingered too long over the cups, was to feel the weight of the Church's displeasure. If his life was an open disgrace to his holy calling he was to be brought to trial and dismissed from the ministry.

Blair and Nicholson did not venture to propose a Bishop of Virginia. For this there were several reasons. It was too much to ask of the governor to surrender entirely his ecclesiastical duties, for his authority over the clergy might, and often did, add much to his influence and power. Nicholson himself, in his second administration, made frequent use of it. It was not to be expected that he should join in any scheme providing for a bishop. Nor were the people prepared for such a radical step. They were well satisfied with the democratic character of their Church and would have resented any attempt to establish a hierarchy. Already Blair's activities had created uneasiness and suspicion. So he found it necessary to go slowly in the matter. That he hoped for the eventual establishment of a bishopric in Virginia, even that he himself might be the first bishop, seems not improbable. If so, however, he was careful to conceal his designs. But he thought it not rash to increase the power of the clergy as a body by demanding representation for them in the Council of State. This would give them a voice in all executive and legislative matters, and would render it possible for them to present their needs and their desires to the government, and to protest against any infringements upon their rights. He himself as commissary, Blair thought best suited for this service.

Such was the scheme for reforming the Virginia Church. It seemed a wise and practicable plan, of far-reaching purport without being violent or revolutionary. Its advocates set to work with enthusiasm and confidence to put it into operation, and

with every hope of complete success. Blair had back of him the entire weight of the Anglican Church. The Bishop of London, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Worcester, the Bishop of Salisbury, and other great prelates gave him their hearty support before the king and queen, the Privy Council, and the Board of Trade. Through their influence he could have almost any reasonable thing within the power of the royal government to give.

Yet the plan proved an utter failure. After many years of endeavor, years filled with heartburnings and bitter contests, no permanent good had been effected for the Church. Nor are the reasons hard to find. Blair had set himself against forces in the colony which were too strong to be overcome even by the full weight of the royal government. His chief enemy was the plantation system. So long as that remained unchanged the Church would always be at a great disadvantage. And this system was too firmly rooted to be altered by any force whatsoever. Moreover, the people became distrustful of the commissary's schemes. They had begun to associate self-government in religious matters with self-government in the state. It aroused alarm and bitter opposition when Blair, with the Crown behind him, attempted to undermine the influence of the vestries and make the ministers independent of them. It would have been well for the clergy had they realized that their hope in the colony lay solely in winning the love and confidence of the people, and in convincing them that the interests of the Church were identical with those of the parishioners. Yet to the end of the colonial period they continued to appeal to the king for the preservation of their privileges and for support against the people and the Assembly of Virginia. The English government usually lent a willing ear to their pleas, but it was able to secure few lasting benefits for them, while the resentment at its interference tended to bring odium upon them. Failure was due also in no slight degree to the loss of executive support in the colony. Some of the most important of Blair's plans could not hope for success without the active assistance of the local government. And the commissary had relied much upon Nicholson. But in 1692, with the removal of the lieutenant-

governor, the executive not only withdrew its aid, but became actively hostile.

But at first the commissary met only with success. He secured the hearty coöperation of the Virginia Assembly, and then sailed for England. Upon his arrival in London, in September, 1693, he at once sought out the Bishop of London and unfolded his plans to him. He "discoursed him at large and plied him with memorials" till he "got him to be very perfect in the Business." But it was the Bishop of Worcester who, at Blair's request, laid the matter before the queen. Her Majesty "seemed to like it extraordinarily." The Archbishop of Canterbury explained the plan to the king. William, too, approved and promised to bestow any of the Virginia revenues that could properly be given away.

Their Majesties gave to the college £1985 14. 10. from the quit-rent fund of the colony, two tracts of land of ten thousand acres each, the disposal of the office of the surveyor-general of Virginia, and the revenue from the duty of one pence per pound on tobacco exported from Virginia and Maryland to other British colonies. "The net surplusage of ye Quit Rents," which amounted to about £400 per annum, was to be utilized for increasing ministers' salaries. One hundred pounds was to be paid Dr. Blair for his services as commissary, and he was given the appointment to the Council of State, which he considered so essential to the welfare of the Church. Moreover, he induced the king to write to the governor directing him to propose in his name to the Assembly that a competent salary be voted the ministers in money, or in tobacco at the current rates.

Despite the apparent importance of these concessions, it would have been well for Blair and the Church had he never gone on his mission to England. His very success with the king and queen created enemies in Virginia. He had made a conflict with the governor almost inevitable. Although his programme had been carried through with the knowledge and approval of Nicholson, it conflicted essentially with the interest of the colonial executive. And when, upon his return to the colony, Blair found his old friend gone, and the government in the hands of Sir Edmund Andros, friction began at once. The new

governor resented Blair's inroads upon the royal funds. In Virginia there was a small revenue belonging to the Crown, derived from an export duty on tobacco, from the quit-rents, and from one or two minor sources. This income, although insufficient for all governmental needs, was large enough to cover the governor's salary, and was of the utmost importance in rendering the executive independent of the Assembly. Every penny that was diverted to other uses could but weaken the government. Andros dared not complain openly, but his resentment is evident. Nor did he relish the encroachment upon his patronage, for the loss of the appointment of the surveyor-general was a matter of no little importance. Moreover, he felt aggrieved that Blair had been appointed to the Council without his recommendation, and contrary to his wishes.

Soon we find the commissary writing to his friends in England in a tone of bitter complaint. Andros, he claimed, was opposing him at every turn, and doing his best to defeat all his schemes for the reformation of the Church. He had blocked the bill for increasing the ministers' salaries, he had hindered and discouraged the building of the college, he had prevented the clergy from receiving any part of the quit-rents, he had interfered with the auditing of the penny-per-pound, he had done nothing to secure permanent tenure for the clergy, he had opposed all ecclesiastical discipline, he had actually braved the king's anger by expelling the commissary from the Council.

In 1697 Blair was back in England, filled with bitterness against Andros, and using his influence with the great bishops to undermine him at court. The governor denied that he was hostile to the Church. In a conference at Lambeth Palace, before the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury, three of his friends defended him against Blair's charges. But they proved no match for the astute commissary, and the bishops left, more strongly convinced than ever that Andros was an impediment to the reform of the Virginia clergy. A few months later the governor wrote asking permission to resign. As his successor the king designated Blair's old friend, Francis Nicholson.

Once more Blair returned in triumph to Virginia. But disappointment, more bitter than before, awaited him there. He

found that Nicholson's attitude had changed since his first administration, and that he was unwilling to coöperate with him in his schemes. Blair seems to have assumed somewhat the attitude of a kingmaker, and took upon himself to advise the governor in important matters and admonish him of his faults. This Nicholson resented. Friction arose from the divided headship of the Church, and each began to accuse the other of infringing upon his province. "He has invaded almost all . . . parts of the ecclesiastical Jurisdiction," wrote Blair, "such as convoking the clergy without taking notice of the Bishop's commissary, . . . appearing himself in their meetings, & proposing the subject matter of their consultation, . . . requiring of some ministers Canonical obedience to himself as their Bishop, taking upon himself to turn out ministers." Soon the old friendship of governor and commissary had changed to the bitterest enmity. Blair joined with five other members of the Council in preferring charges against him before the Board of Trade. He was accused of a long series of crimes and misdemeanors, and in 1705 was recalled. But though Blair was strong enough to force out governors, he could not succeed in his plans to better the clergy. His constant wrangling with one executive after another accomplished no good, and brought the Church into disrepute and emphasized the division of its headship.

Nor did Blair's efforts to secure permanent tenure for the clergy meet with better success. Of all their troubles the ministers complained most loudly of the insecurity of their position. "They are to their several vestries in the nature of hired servants," declared Dr. Blair, "agreed with from year to year, and dismissed if they please . . . without any crime proved or so much as alleged against them. . . . Nothing can have worse effects upon the Clergy than this servitude, for it hinders all good ministers from coming in or staying amongst us . . . it exposes [them] to great poverty and contempt, and makes them base, mean and mercenary." Since the inducting of ministers lay within the governor's province, Blair had at first looked to Nicholson to put an end to this state of affairs. He maintained that in all cases where the vestries refused to present, at the end of six months the governor could force upon them a minister

by inducting *jure devoluto*. With the removal of Nicholson, however, these plans came to naught, for Andros would make no effort to promote them. Not until 1699, when Nicholson returned, was the contest with the vestries begun. Then, despite his quarrel with Blair, the governor took up again the cause of the ministers.

He began by securing from Sir Edward Northey, attorney-general of England, an opinion upon the matter of induction in Virginia. This officer confirmed Blair's view. He gave as his decision that, "If the parishioners do not present a Minister to the Governor, within six months after any Church shall become void, the Governor as ordinary shall and may collate a Clerk to such Church by lapse, and his collatee shall hold the Church for life." Armed with this paper Nicholson began the assault. He ordered copies to be sent to every vestry in the colony, with directions that they should "offer to his Excellency what they thought proper thereupon."

But the result was disappointing. After the lapse of a year only five of the parishes had presented their ministers for induction; thirty-nine had excused themselves, and seven had made no reply at all. The vestries were most frank in expressing their aversion to induction. "We do find Sir Edward Northey's opinion to be very positive and absolute," declared the Upper Parish, Isle of Wight County, "and accordingly acquaint your Excellency that we . . . do not think it proper, neither are we willing to make presentation for Induction." York Church told the governor that they hoped he would not attempt to exert his authority in this matter, "the word Induction Sounding very harsh" in their ears. Northey would undoubtedly have given a different opinion, thought Wilmington parish, had he known the conditions in Virginia, and as no governor had ever inducted ministers until presented by their vestries, they hoped their liberties in this matter would not be interfered with. Saint Mary's White Chapel said that they would consider it a great "Agrievance that such an Imposition as Sir Edward Northey's Report" should be put upon them. They wished to refer the whole matter to the Assembly. Christ Church, Lancaster County, thought induction upon lapse would

be "an extraordinary hardship," and a thing never before heard of in Virginia.

The vestries made out a strong case. As the "founders of the Churches, the Glebes & the Salaries," they claimed that they were the only patrons, and that the control of the parishes could not legally or justly be taken from them. Six months was too short a time for them to secure a minister. Many of the clergy were so unworthy and dissolute that to induct them for life would be very unwise. The difficulty of securing pious men was such that none who were at all suitable had need to fear for their livings. As for Sir Edward's opinion, it had been drawn up hastily and in utter ignorance of conditions in the colony.

Nor did Nicholson dare force the matter to an issue. His threats procured a few presentations, but that was all. Despite Northey's opinion, he "never once collated upon Lapse." The reasons for this surrender are not difficult to find. In the vestries he was opposing the united gentry of the colony. These bodies were composed almost without exception of the ablest, wealthiest, and most influential men of the parishes. Vestrymen filled the Council and the House of Burgesses, they were the commanders of the militia, the collectors, and the sheriffs. To enter into a real test of strength with them would have been perilous for the strongest executive. Moreover, had Nicholson forced his nominees upon the parishes by collation, it would have been an impossible task to collect their dues, for the levying of the parish taxes was entirely in the hands of the vestries. The governor might send them a minister duly armed with all legal papers, but the poor man would have starved if he came contrary to their wishes. And it was beyond the power of any executive to force their hands in this matter. To prosecute the vestrymen for neglect of duty would have been quite futile, for neither the county justices nor the general court would have sustained him. In fact, it would have been difficult to find judges in the colony who were not themselves vestrymen. Any attempt to collect the salaries by executive appointees was not to be thought of. It would have aroused the colony to fury, perhaps to revolution.

For many years the vestries were permitted to enjoy their

victory in peace, but in 1718 they found it necessary to defend themselves against another governor — Alexander Spotswood. This stubborn Scotchman, who was an ardent defender of the royal prerogative, became convinced that his commission made him the rightful patron of the churches, and granted him the power to collate ministers to vacant parishes. He thus claimed even more than Nicholson. The latter had asserted his right only to collate upon lapse, but Spotswood attempted to "command the vestries to take such ministers as he thought fit." He made a test case in Saint Ann's parish, Essex County. This cure being vacant, he collated to it, against the wishes of the vestry, a certain Mr. Bagge. The parishioners refused to accept him, and employed a minister of their own selection. In a sharp letter Spotswood set forth the grounds for his claim and warned them not to dispute his authority. "As the King is the sovereign of the plantations," he wrote, "so he is vested with the right of patronage of all ecclesiastical benefices. . . . If you are the patrons (as you suppose) you may, as soon as you please, bring a *quare impedit*, to try your title; and then it will appear, whether the King's clerk or yours has the most rightfull possession of the Church. In the mean time I think it necessary hereby to forewarn you to be cautious how you dispose of the profits of your parish, lest you pay it in your own wrong." Despite this strong and threatening letter Spotswood could do no more to coerce the vestries than Nicholson. He soon found that the people were violently opposed to his claims and that the courts would not sustain him. He was forced to make a humiliating retreat, and the vestries remained the undisputed patrons and continued to employ the ministers at will.

The movement for better salaries met with partial success. When the Assembly met in October, 1693, Andros neglected to recommend, as the king had ordered him to do, that a competent living be voted the ministers. But the Burgesses of their own accord passed a clergy bill. Under its provisions the price of tobacco in all payments of parish dues was to be reduced from twelve to ten shillings a hundred pounds. As the equivalent of £80 was allowed by law, this would increase salaries from 13,333 pounds of tobacco a year to 16,000 pounds. Unfortunately,

however, after the act had passed the Burgesses, it came before the governor, together with a number of other bills which were being considered in a general revisal of the laws. A dispute arose between the two houses over this revisal, and all the laws, including the clergy bill, were vetoed.

In the spring of 1695 Andros, spurred on by Blair's loud complaints, brought the matter again to the attention of the Assembly and told them the king's wishes. But the Burgesses, who doubtless resented the commissary's meddling, did not receive the message with favor. The ministers, they replied to the governor, were doing quite well enough, and most of them seemed satisfied. The demand for better salaries, they thought, came only from the "avaritiously inclined." Nor could the governor and the Council bring them to a more conciliatory attitude, and the session ended without relief. In 1696, however, after much bickering between the House and the Council, a law was finally forced through, giving the ministers 16,000 pounds of tobacco a year. But the clergy were to be cumbered with unfavorable conditions of collecting and receiving their too bulky stipends, and this, as Blair bitterly complained, made the new law far less acceptable than that which had been proposed in 1693.

In the meanwhile the clergy had worked themselves into a high pitch of indignation at the House for its too optimistic statement of their condition. At a convocation in June, 1696, they made a formal protest to the governor, claiming that the Burgesses had entirely misrepresented the facts and that their circumstances were most deplorable. Andros seems to have kept this matter secret until the new clergy bill had passed, and then, when it was too late for the Assembly to reconsider its action, he placed the address before them. The Burgesses were furious. They drew up several resolutions declaring the paper "a most malicious Scandalous and unjust" reflection upon them, vindicating their former representation, and protesting again that the complaints of the clergy were groundless. Had it not been that some of the more moderate members of the House attempted to smooth over this matter, it "had certainly set the Country and the Clergy together by the Ears."

The Clergy Act alleviated somewhat the condition of the ministers, but their salaries under it were still inadequate; so inadequate, that it was no easier now to bring over able clergymen than it had been before. Blair was deeply chagrined, and blamed the governor for the miscarriage of his plans; but he could secure nothing more from the Assembly.

Even the college proved a disappointment. When the commissary returned from England it seemed that the project could not fail to be a splendid success. But the hostility of Andros proved a stumbling-block. The governor would give nothing himself to the college, and he encouraged his friends to refuse to pay the subscriptions they had made during Nicholson's time. He hindered in several ways the collection of the college dues; he tried to pervert the trustees from taking possession of the land granted by the king. Blair claimed that he went so far as to make it a party matter. "In elections of Burgesses . . .", he said, "all the governor's friends employ their utmost interest to keep out anyone that is a friend of the college, and do commonly prevail by this argument: 'if you choose such a one,' say they, 'he is a Collegian, and we shall have a tax for the College.'"

The work of erecting the main building was begun in August, 1695. But the lack of funds and the governor's opposition caused great delay, and it seems to have been completed only in 1700. Six years later it was entirely destroyed by fire. This proved a severe blow, and it was many years before Blair succeeded in repairing the damage. When the institution first opened its doors it was no more than a grammar school with one master and an usher, but during Spotswood's administration professors were added and advanced courses begun. In 1729 the trustees had succeeded in founding all the departments in the college contemplated in the charter. The number of matriculates was at no period large. In 1792 there were twenty-nine in attendance, all scholars at the grammar school; in 1736 there were sixty, and in 1754 one hundred and fifteen.

Despite the slowness of its growth, the college did eventually accomplish something for the improvement of the clergy. A divinity school was established with two professors, one of whom taught Hebrew and expounded the Bible, while the other

lectured on "controversies with heretics." The president also lectured on some theological subject once a week. Before the middle of the century some of the graduates of the school were going to England for their ordination and returning to add an element of strength and true piety to the clergy. In 1749 Rev. William Dawson declared that the Virginia churches were being supplied with "better ministers from our own Seminary" than from the British colleges. Unfortunately this state of affairs seems to have been of short duration. "The people of the Country are discouraged from bringing up their Children for the Ministry," wrote the Bishop of London only two years later, "because of the hazard and expense of sending them to England to take orders. . . . Of those who are sent from hence, a great part . . . can get no employment at home and enter into the service more out of necessity than choice. Some others are willing to go aboard to retrieve either lost fortunes or lost Characters." The number of native Virginians who became ministers seems never to have been large. The clergy remained, until the Revolution, in a sense a body of foreigners, not fully in sympathy with the life and customs of the people, and looking always for support to the Crown. Thus, after all, the college, like Blair's other projects, fell short of accomplishing for the Church the good that had been hoped.

Nor did better success attend the attempts to establish ecclesiastical discipline. At first Blair proposed to exercise a control in this matter not only over ministers, but over the laity as well. As early as 1690 he called a convocation at Jamestown to devise machinery for enforcing the Church laws. Steps were to be taken against "all Cursors, Swearers, and blasphemers, . . . all drunkards, ranters and prophaners of the Lords day and all Contemnners of the Sacraments, and against all other Scandalous persons, whether of the Clergy or Laity." In order to carry out this work he divided the colony into four precincts and appointed in each a minister to act as his deputy. This man was to be guardian of the morals of his precinct and was to summon the clergy under him twice a year to sit in judgment upon the "scandals and enormities committed within their jurisdiction." But it became evident at once that the people of Virginia

would not tolerate ecclesiastical discipline. The ministers did not dare bring charges against the members of their congregations and subject them to the humiliation of penance. Often they felt so much under the power of their vestries that they did not venture even to preach against their vices. Some years later Blair wrote that he had found himself powerless, because the colonists had "a great aversion to spiritual courts." He laid the blame partly upon Andros, who did his best "to feed & foment a Jealousy in the Country against Ecclesiastical Discipline," and had refused to acknowledge the authority of the church courts, making the civil justices try "incestuous marriages and all other spiritual causes."

Nor did this weapon prove effective even against the clergy. Many parishes were slow to prefer charges against their ministers, and it was difficult to secure positive proof. Moreover, the want of clergymen in the colony made leniency a matter of necessity. Unless the clergy "are notoriously Scandalous," wrote Blair in 1724, "I have found it necessary to content myself with admonitions, for if I lay them aside by suspension, we have no unprovided Clergymen to put in their place." During the thirty-four years that he had been commissary he had "made but 2 examples of this kind." He was forced to remain passive, or to content himself with admonitions, while the conduct of the clergy brought the Church into disrepute. "The behaviour of some men is so flagrant," he wrote despairingly in 1723, "that we had better be without ministers than to be served with such as are scandals to the Gospel." How ineffective ecclesiastical discipline proved is clearly shown by a letter to written the Bishop of London in 1726. The sober part of the clergy, it was declared, are "slothfull & negligent, and the others so debauched that they are the foremost & most bent in all manner of vices. Drunkenness is the common Vice and brings with it other indecencies, which among the ignorant creates disrespect to the character and indifferency in matters of Religion."

It is impossible to view without regret the utter failure of this movement to reform the Virginia Church. Had it succeeded, it would have conferred great and lasting benefits upon the colony. A body of sincere and learned ministers would have added an

element of strength to the moral fiber of society, and would have been an invaluable stimulus to the cause of education. But the undertaking was from the first doomed to failure, for Blair and Compton had attempted the impossible. They tried to make conditions in Virginia conform to the laws and the structure of the Anglican Church. Since their ecclesiastical robes did not fit the shoulders of this young child of England, they would have altered the shoulders. It did not occur to them that they might alter the robes. Able men though they were, they could not see that the Church would fail of its mission in Virginia unless it shaped itself to conditions in the colony and to the needs of its people.

Blair's life was a sad one. For three decades he struggled against hopeless odds with all the energy and fearlessness of his sturdy Scotch nature, only to see in the end the futility of it all. In his declining years the signs of decay in the Church began to multiply. The clergy were becoming more and more corrupt, less capable of holding the esteem of the people. Dissenting preachers were making inroads upon the congregations. Even the apathy of old age could not conceal from him the fact that his worst fears were being realized.

The ruin that he had predicted came in full measure with the Revolution. At the first clash of arms the weakness of the policy pursued by the Church throughout all the colonial period became apparent. They had put their trust in the Crown, now they were to fall with the Crown. Had their cause been rooted deeply in the hearts of the people, misfortune would not have overtaken them. But they had come to be considered as a body of foreigners, hopelessly out of sympathy with the democratic aspirations of the colonists, their lives a discredit to their calling, and their services not worth the cost of their maintenance.

Hardly had Lord Dunmore been chased out of the country when the attacks upon the establishment began. Successive acts passed by the legislature overthrew completely the old order. All restrictions upon dissenters were removed, church dues were abolished, the glebes were confiscated. In short, a complete separation of Church and State was effected. The clergy, thus deprived of their parish dues, could no longer maintain them-

selves and deserted their congregations by the score. When the war began, there were ninety-one Anglican clergymen in Virginia, at its close but twenty-eight. Throughout the state desolation fell upon the parishes. Churches were closed up and allowed to fall into decay. Many congregations did without worship or went over to the dissenters. The Church which had once commanded the united love and obedience of all Virginia was within its borders almost lifeless.

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